

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ADP-00 CU-04 RSR-01 CIAE-00 INR-10

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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9541

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 COLOMBO 1306

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CE

SUBJ: YOUTH PARA

REF A. STATE 70302 B. STATE 88033 C. COLOMBO 1214

FOLLOWING IS INFORMATION TO COMPLETE YOUTH PARA MATERIAL
TRANSMITTED IN REF C; NUMBERING SYSTEM CORRESPONDS TO OUTLINE
REFTEL A.

I. B. WEIGHTS ASSIGNED ABOVE CATEGORIES REFLECT ATTEMPT
BALANCE MISSION' S EFFORTS TO REACH BOTH YOUTH MOVING UP
IN THE ESTABLISHMENT AND INCREASING POPULATION OF DISSIDENT
YOUTH. FORMAL COMPONENTS OF INFRASTRUCTURE, I. E. PARTY POL-
ITICS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICE, STILL ATTRACT THE MOST TALENTED
OF SRI LANKA YOUTH. OPPORTUNITIES IN THESE CHANNELS ARE
LIMITED, HOWEVER, SO MANY WELL- EDUCATED YOUTH HAVE MOVED INTO
OTHER ROLES RANGING FROM THE RELIGIOUS TO THE VIOLENTLY
INSURGENT. NON- ESTABLISHMENT POLITICAL ACTIVITY IS AT PRESENT
SUBDUED, ALMOST COVERT, AND SUSPICIOUS OF APPROACHES BY
REPRESENTATIVES OF EITHER CEYLONese ESTABLISHMENT OR FOREIGN
EMBASSIES.

I. C. SHORT- TERM YOUTH IMPACT

MOST OF THE LEADERSHIP AND MANY SPEAR- CARRIERS OF 71 IN-
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SURRECTION ARE STILL IN DETENTION, AND IT IS UNLIKELY THAT INSURGENCY OF 1971 TYPE WILL BE REPEATED WITHIN THE NEXT TWO TO FOUR YEARS. OTHER FORMS OF CHALLENGE TO ESTABLISHMENT ARE POSSIBLE, HOWEVER. FOR EXAMPLE, RUMORS NOW CENTER ON POSSIBILITY THAT COLLECTION OF YOUNG MAOISTS LED BY PM'S SON-IN-LAW KUMAR RUPASINGHE (EDITOR OF NEW SINHALA NEWSPAPER JANAVEGAYA) MIGHT OBTAIN DECISIVE INFLUENCE OVER MRS B. WITHIN STRUCTURE OF ESTABLISHMENT PARTIES, MAJOR EFFECT OF INSURGENCY HAS BEEN DIVISIVE DEBATE BY EACH PARTY ON WHAT ITS ATTITUDE SHOULD BE TOWARD THOSE INVOLVED IN INSURRECTION AND ON HOW LEGITIMATE GRIEVANCES (FELT NOT ONLY BY INSURGENTS BUT BY MOST YOUTH) AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS SHOULD BE PRESENTED TO UNITED FRONT GOVERNMENT. IF FAR LEFT SOLUTION TO THESE QUESTIONS WERE ACCEPTED, GSL MIGHT BE PUSHED INTO SPEEDING UP TRANSFORMATION OF SRI LANKA INTO "SOCIALIST SOCIETY", INCLUDING INCREASE IN SUBSIDIES AND OVERLY GENEROUS WELFARE MEASURES SRI LANKA'S ECONOMY CANNOT SUPPORT. WHILE THE ISSUES OF WHO GOVERNS SRI LANKA AND OF THE STATE OF CEYLONESE ECONOMY IN THEMSELVES HAVE SOMEWHAT LIMITED IMPACT ON U. S. IMMEDIATE INTERESTS, THEY NONETHELESS COULD COMPLICATE POWER RELATIONSHIPS IN SOUTH ASIA AND THE INDIAN OCEAN TO U. S. DISADVANTAGE. FOR EXAMPLE, THEY COULD AFFECT THE STABILITY ON THE AREA WHICH UNITED STATES DESIRES AND CAUSE CESSATION OF U. S. SHIP VISITS TO COLOMBO AND VOA OPERATIONS ON ISLAND. FOR THE TWO TO FOUR YEAR PERIOD IN QUESTION, CURRENT PROSPECTS GIVE THE EDGE TO CONTINUATION IN POWER OF PRESENT ESTABLISHMENT.

II. B. RATIONALE FOR OBJECTIVES

ALTHOUGH US MISSION CAN EXPECT TO HAVE RELATIVELY LITTLE INFLUENCE ON MAJOR SHORT-TERM YOUTH DEVELOPMENTS IN SRI LANKA, ONE PRIORITY GOAL MUST BE MAINTENANCE OF YOUTH CONTACTS TO UNDERSTAND POLITICAL AND SOCIAL TRENDS IN CEYLONESE SOCIETY. AT SAME TIME, PRESENT FLOUNDERING OF SRI LANKA POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS OFFERS OPPORTUNITY FOR MISSION TO EXPAND EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH USEFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUTHFUL LEADERS, TO DEMONSTRATE NECESSITY OF PRAGMATIC APPROACHES TO NATIONAL PROBLEMS, AND TO SEEK TO AFFECT ATTITUDES TOWARD UNITED STATES AND U. S. POLICIES AND GOALS FAVORABLY.

III. A. IMPROVEMENTS IN ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES

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USIS IS CONCENTRATING MORE OF ITS EFFORTS ON PROGRAMS DIRECTED AT YOUTH AUDIENCES, PARTICULARLY AT UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA. LARGEST SHARE OF EXCHANGE PROGRAM IS ALREADY DEVOTED TO THIS GROUP.

IV. B. RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH -- EXPLANATION OF ASSESSMENT

SRI LANKA HAS ONE OF YOUNGEST POPULATIONS IN WORLD. UNITED NATIONS REPORT STATES THAT PERSONS BETWEEN 14 AND 28 CONSTITUTE OVER 40 PERCENT OF SRI LANKA'S POPULATION. JOB SITUATION IS DISMAL, HOWEVER. ACCORDING LOCAL ESTIMATES, 75 PERCENT OF PERSONS UNDER 30 YEARS OF AGE WHO SEEK FULL-TIME, PERMANENT EMPLOYMENT ARE UNEMPLOYED. AVERAGE WAITING PERIOD FROM TIME PERSON LEAVES SCHOOL TO WHEN HE OBTAINS PERMANENT WORK IS EIGHT YEARS; WAIT TENDS TO BE LONGER FOR THOSE WITH GREATER EDUCATION. THIS PROBLEM HAS BEEN COMPOUNDED IN RECENT YEARS BY RAPID EXPANSION OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY, CREATING LARGE ARTICULATE, POLITICALLY AWARE CLASS. ALIENATION IS NOT, HOWEVER, CONFINED TO UNEMPLOYED. WELL-CONNECTED AND EMPLOYED YOUTH ARE AWARE BOTH OF FATE OF THEIR CONTEMPORARIES AND OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS CONFRONTING SRI LANKA. (ONE OF SHOCKS OF INSURRECTION AS WELL AS SOURCE OF CONTINUING GOSSIP WAS ALLEGED PARTICIPATION OF HIGHLY-CONNECTED YOUTH IN INSURGENCY.)
VAN HOLLEN

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ADDING TO ECONOMIC FRUSTRATION IS DIFFICULTY CEYLONESE YOUTH HAVE IN MOVING INTO MEANINGFUL POLITICAL ACTIVITY. GENERATION THAT HELD REINS OF POWER 25 YEARS AGO AT INDEPENDENCE STILL RULES TODAY. IN SOCIETY SUCH AS SRI LANKA'S IN WHICH POLITICS AND ECONOMICS ARE CONSIDERED TOTALLY INTER-RELATED, THIS MEANS YOUTH LACK PROSPECT OF EFFECTING SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN ECONOMIC CONDITIONS. WITH NO AMELIORATION OF GENERAL ECONOMIC SITUATION IN SIGHT, IT IS POSSIBLE TO ANTICIPATE THAT MOST OF YOUNG GENERATION WILL MATURE BITTER AND FRUSTRATED ON BOTH ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SCORES. LEADERS EVENTUALLY DRAWN FROM THIS GENERATION MAY BE ALIENATED TO EXTENT

THAT LEADS AWAY FROM PRESENT DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL SYSTEM .
IN MEANTIME, GSL TALKS OF NEED TO HAVE SUPPORT OF YOUTH
BUT LARGELY FAILS TO RESPOND CONSTRUCTIVELY TO THEIR GRIEVANCES
AND MOVES CONSISTENTLY TOWARD ESTABLISHING MORE AND MORE
CONTROLS (CONTINUATION OF EMERGENCY REGULATIONS, CREATION
OF PRESS COUNCIL, CONTINUED DETENTION WITHOUT TRIAL OR
REHABILITATION OF SUSPECTED INSURGENTS) WHICH ARE CORROSIVE
OF NORMAL POLITICAL PROCESS.

SITUATION BEARS UPON US INTERESTS. IT IS
CONCEIVABLE THAT OVER FIVE TO TEN YEAR PERIOD THESE AND
SIMILAR TENSIONS MIGHT BRING ABRUPT CHANGE IN POLITICAL
SYSTEM IN SRI LANKA. A " WORST CASE" EXAMPLE MIGHT BE POLITICAL
DEVELOPMENT PRODUCING USSR- SUPPORTED INDIAN INTERVENTION IN
THE ISLAND, WHICH COULD AFFECT US- PRC- USSR RELATIONSHIPS IN
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INDIAN OCEAN. TO FOSTER STABILITY IN SRI LANKA AND THE
REGION, BEST US COURSE IS TO ENCOURAGE GSL TO SEEK
CONSTRUCTIVE MEANS OF SETTLING THESE TENSIONS. AMONG OTHER
THINGS THIS MIGHT INCLUDE ENCOURAGEMENT OF MORE RATIONAL ECONOMIC
POLICIES AND MAINTENANCE OF POSITION ON GENUINE NON- ALIGNMENT.
MISSION SHOULD IN GENERAL MAINTAIN BROAD, OPEN DIALOGUE WITH ALL
SEGMENTS AND LEVELS OF SOCIETY, INCLUDING YOUTH.

AS FOREGOING INDICATES, YOUTH ARE HIGHLY IMPORTANT ELEMENT
IN CEYLONESE SOCIETY. EMBASSY IDENTIFIES EIGHT PERCENT OF ITS
TOTAL RESOURCES AS TARGETED EXCLUSIVELY AT YOUTH. OTHER GENERAL
MISSION ACTIVITIES, HOWEVER, CONTRIBUTE INDIRECTLY TO THE
NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT REQUIRED TO REUCE ALIENATION AND
IMPROVE THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT.
VAN HOLLEN

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